

QR: It's Code for Engaging Students



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Explanation video
(two-step equations)



Review video
(simple equations)



Algebra website



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You've probably seen QR (quick response) codes in ads and on billboards. What you might not be as familiar with are the educational applications for these handy scannable bar codes. The potential for this application is exciting and might be a "killer app" for getting cell phones more readily accepted in education.

For those who aren't familiar with QR codes, they are 2D matrix barcodes that you can scan using a variety of devices, particularly smartphones. You can encode them with data such as URLs, text, or vCards (virtual business cards), and they can even act as prompts to send a text message or generate a tweet. They're free of any proprietary license and can be encoded with more data than older types of barcodes.

To use a QR code, you need a device that can read them, such as a cell phone or iPod with a camera, and QR reading software. I-nigma is one maker of scanning software that works on many devices.

To generate your own QR codes, you need software. If you already use Goo.gl or Bit.ly to shorten URLs, you'll find that they now both include a QR code as part of their output.

There are also more full-featured QR code generators, such as QR Code and 2D Code Generator and Kaywa QR Code Generator, which allow you to encode not only a URL but also a text or a vCard.

There are many great educational applications for QR codes. Here are just a few:

- Post codes for homework, extra help, etc., on the board.
- Use codes to provide easy access to different types of content at learning stations.
- Differentiate instruction by providing codes linking to various types of remediation or enrichment (or multiple styles of resources, such as video, text, and audio) for homework.
- Implement clicker-type applications, such as polls, by projecting a screen with multiple-choice QR codes.
- Provide multimedia content via print by using codes to link to videos or interactive content on a textbook page or in a handout.
- Post a code on the door with an embedded text file containing homework assignments, spelling or

vocabulary lists, or writing prompts. Students can scan it on the way out the door so they are less likely to lose track of the information.

- Have students complete an activity, such as a series of stations, a treasure hunt, or a geocache. When they finish, they scan a QR code, which then allows them to send a tweet or a text message to the teacher.
- Attach codes to library or classroom bookshelves with links to video reviews or more information.



Instead of banning student cell phones in school, let's use them to enrich their learning.

By Karen Fasimpaur

Multidisciplinary

- Post codes in strategic places around the school or include in parent/community newsletters to spread the word about great things happening at your school.
- Have students create QR codes linked to associated content to enrich their own presentations (book reports, murals, dioramas) with QR codes.
- You can also use QR codes for professional development. At the Northwest Council for Computer Education (NCCE) 2011 conference in Portland, Oregon, last March, organizers posted QR codes at the door to each workshop and session with a link to electronic handouts and additional resources.

QR codes may prove to be particularly valuable for schools because educators can incorporate them into printed handouts, allowing kids to access information, watch videos, or get extra help outside the classroom. Instead of banning student cell phones in school, let's use them to enrich their learning.

Resources

I-nigma: www.i-nigma.com/SupportedDevices.html

Kaywa QR Code Generator: <http://qrcode.kaywa.com>

QR Code and 2D Code Generator: <http://keremerkkan.net/qr-code-and-2d-code-generator>



Karen Fasimpaur works with schools to integrate mobile technology with the curriculum to enhance learning. She is also an evangelist for open education, an award-winning author, a blogger, and an aspiring carpenter.

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